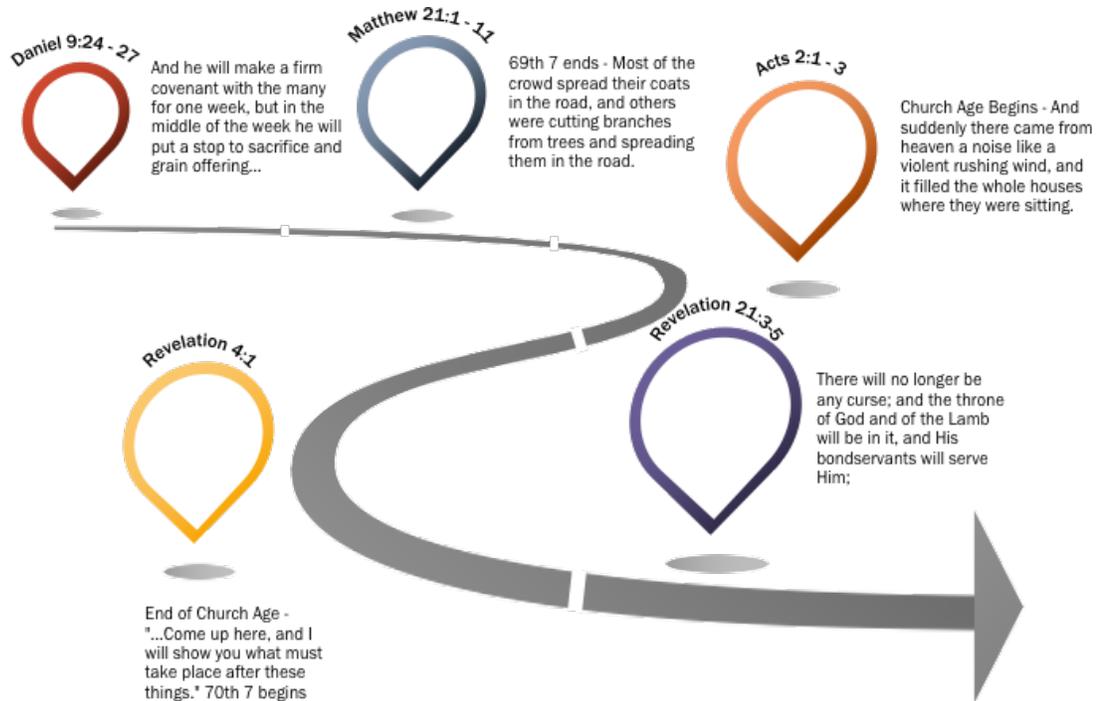


**This Is For You
Dear Churches...
Revelation 1:4-8**

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We have learned that although the church today, as a whole, neglects this book because they say it is hard to understand, it really isn't. There is an assumption made by John though that you know your Old Testament. Tracking key points through the scriptures in the lead up to Revelation.



Jesus wants us to know what is in this book. As believers, we are His servants, we are His friends (John 15:15) and we are also His prophets. We are involved in the proclamation of His word to the world. This is called the Great Commission. This is the mission He gave to us as He was leaving this planet (Matthew 28:19-20.) Because of this, He wants us to know, so we can warn, what is coming.

In Amos 3:7 we see God's heart towards His servants, to those who are involved in the proclaiming of His word. "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets." (NASB95)

On top of that, we also learned that there is a special blessing for those who read and study and heed this book. Reading the book is good, so is studying it, but as with all of God's word, we are to heed it as well, to follow what He says.

Looking at our text.

Revelation 1:4–8

“John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”” (NASB95)

All the author, John, has to do is say who he is. He has been in all the churches in Asia Minor and at his advanced age is a bit of a celebrity. John is the Christian equivalent of a 1st century rock star. He does not have to give any further information other than his name. At this time in the life of the church, the churches in Asia Minor know who he is.

This is John. The Apostle. The one whom Jesus loved. The one who walked and talked with Jesus during His ministry here on earth. He was there at the mount of transfiguration. He is the last living apostle. He is also the same John who won a foot race with Peter to the tomb. John made sure we knew about that.

John 20:2–5

“So she went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” Then Peter and the other disciple set out to go to the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down and saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in.” (NET)

John had lived in one of the cities of Asia Minor. He made Ephesus his home, at least until he was exiled to Patmos by the Emperor, he made that his home. What led John to move from Jerusalem to Ephesus we really are not overly clear on. Tradition though says he left Jerusalem around the same time Rome destroyed the Temple. Many believers left Jerusalem at that time and migrated to other cities.

Irenaeus provides some of the background on this for us. “Yea, and the Church in Ephesus, having had both Paul for its founder, and John to abide among them until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the Apostles’ tradition.” (Saint Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons and Keble trans. 1872, 208-209)

Perhaps John remained in the city until the conflict of the years immediately preceding the destruction of the temple, the city and the Jewish nation, by Titus in AD 70. Many believers, including the apostles, fled the city in those days just before the siege, in obedience to the command Christ had given (Mk. 13:14) and it seems likely that John made Ephesus his new base. (Jackman 1988, 12)

The reliable evidence of tradition is that eventually John went to Ephesus. The tradition is also supported by the Apocalypse, from which we infer that it was written by someone who was a leader in Asia Minor and specifically Ephesus, the first church mentioned. Extrabiblical literature is replete with accounts of John’s activities. (Ryrie 2005, 278)

Because everyone knows who John is and that he is an apostle, those reading this book “needed no further identification than the name John, because for the Christians throughout the province of Asia there was only one person who could speak with authority, namely, the apostle. As members of the seven churches residing in the province of Asia (the western region of Asia Minor), they knew the venerable John.” (Kistemaker and Hendriksen 1953-2001, 80-81)

So, John, sometime after 70 AD, went to Ephesus. While in Ephesus, he became a frequent fixture in all of the churches of Asia Minor. He knew about all of the churches in the area and may have taught in all of them at one time or another. There are many more churches in Asia Minor than the seven referenced in this book.

That does present a question.

The letter is only addressed to seven of the local area churches, and why the number seven? So, this brings us to a discussion of the significance of the number seven in scripture.

The number seven is a number that repeats throughout scripture in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. "In the OT the number was used to denote "fullness" (e.g., Lev. 4–16; 26:18–28). The idea of completeness originates from the account of creation in Gen. 1, where six days of creating are followed by the consummation. It is thus likely that the seven churches of Asia function representatively for the whole church." (Beale and McDonough 2007, 1089) The number came to reflect completeness. As we review the seven churches, we will see the seven churches reflect a complete view of all churches throughout the ages.

Why these seven churches and not others, we do not know. There is a commonality with the seven churches addressed. Mounce tells us "It is the area represented by the ancient kingdom of Pergamum, which in 133 B.C. fell to the Romans. It is not quite certain why Revelation was addressed to seven churches, and, more specifically, to these seven churches. There were other churches in Asia (Troas, Acts 20:5ff.; Colossae, Col 1:2; Hierapolis, Col 4:13) that were of equal importance." (Mounce 1997, 45) There is a bigger purpose though in these exact churches and even in the order that they were addressed.

What we shall see, as we examine the letters to the churches, is that the seven churches are descriptive of every church in Asia Minor at the time, not just the seven mentioned. Somewhere in the local area, there are other churches that have some of the same characteristics as the seven focused on by John.

The seven churches are also characteristic of every church throughout history; at times, every church may have looked like one of the seven churches, or possibly portions of more than one of those churches. The letters also will point to specific points in church history as well. There is disagreement on this point among scholars but I have found that there is an interesting "coincidence" that exists as you look at the churches and at church history.

Each of the churches discussed in Revelation have, in terms of the things going on in each church, existed throughout the centuries and they still exist somewhere in the world today. But it is the order that is, when you align them with church history, that makes you want to go "hmm."

Each letter has the additional phrase, "...says to the churches." This term clearly means that "yes, the letter is for a church, but it is also for the church as a whole." It is for all of the churches, then and now. The word for church used is the word ἐκκλησία – ekklesia - people with shared belief, community, congregation. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 303)

As you dig into the word for church a bit, we learn that the word root for ekklesia comes from another Greek word , καλεω – kaleo – "To call" in the sense of "to call to," "to invite," (Schmidt 1964-, 488) The church are people with a shared belief who also are called into an ongoing relationship that provides for the ground of commonality, faith in Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament the primary reference of "church" is to a group of believers. So in certain languages the term may be translated as "gathering (group) of believers," or even "group of people who believe in Jesus Christ." (Bratcher and Hatton 1993, 18)

As we look at this, we can see that the church is a called out or invited group of people who share in common, faith in the completed work that Jesus Christ did on the cross. If you know Jesus, there is an expectation that you and I will be obedient followers, and that means fellowshiping with other believers. We are sheep and do better when we are part of a flock. This gives us just one more reason to know how important it is for us to be inviting others to come and see (John 1:46) our Savior and how we do life together in the church. If we are doing life together in obedience, those who do not know Him can see Him in us and how we react and live day to day in the life of the church. Of course, that assumes the

church is healthy and those in it are being faithful followers of Jesus, we will learn that for some of the churches to be discussed by Jesus, that is a problem. He will provide a diagnosis for each church and what is needed to return to full health. He also provides a prognosis for those who do not take advantage of what is needed to return to full health.

As in other letters that we have studied in the New Testament, there is a common greeting that Paul uses in his letters. John uses the same greeting.

“Grace and peace.”

The greeting actually is a nifty way to combine the two cultures that are coming together into the body of Christ, the church. The greeting acknowledges the Jews and the gentiles. “The word grace is *charis*, the Greek form of greeting, and peace is *shalom*, the Hebrew form of greeting. Peace flows from grace, and grace is the source of all our blessings today.” (McGee 1997, 890)

And of course, we know what grace is:

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

I have heard folks say that the things which are written in Revelation are scary, frightening even. But before getting into the spooky stuff, John reveals the grace of God, from which we have peace with God.

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” (NASB95)

John remembers these words of Jesus and he wants us to know, as believers, we do not need to be frightened by what we read or study in this book. He wants us to rest in Him because He knows that what is coming is indeed scary, but we have a need to know. We need to know what is in this book.

Jesus explicitly wants us to know what is coming.

John wants us to know we have the peace of God in our hearts as we go about reading and studying this book. Learning what is in this book should draw us closer to Him and our rest in His grace. The source of this grace and peace is a supernatural source? God in three persons.

John goes there next when he says this is “from Him who is and who was and who is to come.”

Exodus 3:14–15

“God said to Moses, “I AM that I AM.” And he said, “You must say this to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” God also said to Moses, “You must say this to the Israelites, ‘The LORD—the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this is my memorial from generation to generation.’” (NET)

Deuteronomy 32:39

“See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.” (NASB95)

God is in control of our now. We can trust Him with our now because He has been in control of our yesterdays as well as all of the yesterdays before our yesterdays. He intervened in the yesterdays to deal with His people and also with us, just as He deals with us now. We can know He is truly faithful, as the God who is now, and was the same yesterday, is also the same God of our tomorrows.

But getting back to the urgency of the message, He is also the God of what is to come, the God of tomorrows, the God of the future. Remember, He is outside of time. But He uses the term “is to come.”

Moreover, the replacement of the future “will be” with “is to come” highlights the main stress of the book, that God’s decisive intervention in history, namely the eschaton, is imminent. God’s eternal power, already seen in the past and guaranteed in the future, is still at work in the present, even if for a time he is allowing the forces of evil to have their day. (Osborne 2002, 61)

“...and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne...” This is the Holy Spirit, and again, that number, seven.

Zechariah 4:2–7

He said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.” Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, “What are these, my lord?” So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ” (NASB95)

It is possible that Isa. 11:2ff. (LXX) is included along with Zechariah in the background of the “seven spirits,” since this text is alluded to in Rev. 5:5–6 (cf. “root” of Isa. 11:1 in 5:5 and the mention of “the seven spirits of God” in 5:6; note also the use of Isa. 11:4 in 1:16). Isa. 11:2ff. (LXX) shows that God’s sevenfold Spirit is what equips the Messiah to establish his end-time reign, and this idea is already implied in Rev. 1:4b, since 3:1 expands it by explaining that Christ “has the seven spirits of God.” (Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary 1999, 189-190)

Looking at Isaiah 11:2 in the Septuagint we read the following.

Isaiah 11:2

And there shall rest upon him a spirit of God, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and of reverence (Ottley ed. 1909, Is 11:2)

Grace and peace flow from God through the Holy Spirit and it is only possible by Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:5

“...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—” (NASB95)

Revelation 1:5

“καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ,” (NA27)

In the Greek, Jesus Christ is the witness, the μάρτυς (martus.) This is the Greek word from which we get the English word martyr. “One who testifies in legal matters, one who affirms or attests, testifier, one who witnesses at cost of life, witness, martyr.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 619)

The word carries a potential legal connotation with it as well. It provides a “Witness to Facts in the Legal Sphere. The proper sphere of μάρτυς is the legal, where it denotes one who can and does speak from personal experience about actions in which he took part and which happened to him, or about persons and relations known to him.” (Strathmann 1964-, 476)

Not only is Jesus the witness, a theme which runs throughout the book of Revelation, and He is the primary witness to the things which are in this book. He was also the first martyr, the first witness who

persevered. “Jesus is the archetype and paradigm for the believer, who also must stand against evil and idolatry even when it may mean one’s life.” (Osborne 2002, 62)

Because He is the witness, He is faithful, πιστός (pistis) – “pertaining to being worthy of belief or trust, trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust/faith.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 820)

The witness of Jesus Christ is a witness that is believable, trustworthy, and faithful. Unlike some of the witnesses we read about today, who will say whatever they are paid enough to say or will fabricate something out of thin air, Jesus is “the witness.” He is faithful to provide for us, no matter how hard it is to read, truth. He is faithful to a degree that will call into mind the English definition of the word martyr. In Revelation 2, Jesus will describe this level of faithfulness in His message to Smyrna.

Revelation 2:10

“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (NASB95)

Jesus is this kind of witness; He paved the path for all of us as to what the true definition of being faithful truly means. To be truly faithful to Jesus Christ means we have such an understanding of Him and what He has done for us that we view our future with Him as more real than our present on this world.

He does not separate him into two, but witnesses to both aspects of him at once, both that he is the Word of the Father and that he was made flesh. He is the faithful witness; for according to the apostle “he bore witness before Pontius Pilate by a good confession.” But he says he was because he is God and Lord of all even though he is incarnate. Such witness is certainly the truth. For he calls the one who is true faithful and trustworthy. (Oecumenius and Suggit trans. 2006, 24)

He is “the firstborn of the dead.” This is a repeat of what we see elsewhere in the new testament. In Colossians 1:15 Paul tells us that “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (NASB95)

In the old testament, we also see the same theme. The psalmist tells us in Psalm 89:26–27 “He will call out to me, ‘You are my father, my God, and the protector who delivers me.’ I will appoint him to be my firstborn son, the most exalted of the earth’s kings.” (NET)

Christ was the first to receive a resurrection body that is immortal. (C. C. Ryrie 1995, 2013)

He is also the “ruler of the kings of the earth.” As I read this line, and in light of the Genesis 11 as well as the Deuteronomy 32 worldview and the additional evidence we saw Daniel 11, I had to wonder who we are talking about here. Are we talking about physical earthly kings, or are we talking about the powers behind the throne which Paul alluded to in Ephesians 6:11 – 12 when he said to “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (NASB95)

As we look at this passage in Ephesians 6, we see that Paul uses three words to describe these rulers and the terms show us who they really are. He calls them rulers, powers and the world forces of this darkness. These are terms being associated with fallen divine beings who are impacting events in the physical world.

Rulers - ἀρχάς – archas - an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority, the sphere of one’s official activity, rule, office. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 138)

Powers - ἐξουσίας – exsousia - the right to control or command, authority, absolute power, warrant. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 353)

World forces – κοσμοκράτορας – komokrateras - world-ruler (used of world-ruling gods). (Arndt, et al. 2000, 561)

Jesus though is “the” ruler - ἄρχων – archon - one who has eminence in a ruling capacity, ruler, lord, prince. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 140)

Jesus is chief, He is first. He is the first born of the dead and He is the firstborn ruler, chief of the kings of the earth, and the picture is one that expresses the tension of prophecy, an already but not yet nature of what is being said.

Christ’s kingship over “the rulers of the earth” does not yet indicate at this point his rule over his redeemed people but over his defeated enemies, since the almost identical phrase οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (“the kings of the earth”) refers typically elsewhere in Revelation to antagonists to God’s kingdom (6:15; 17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:19; cf. 16:14). This includes not only the kingdoms and peoples represented by the kingdoms but also the satanic forces behind these kingdoms. (Beale, The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary 1999, 191)

Psalm 2:7–12

“The king says, “I will announce the LORD’S decree. He said to me: ‘You are my son! This very day I have become your father! Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your personal property. You will break them with an iron scepter; you will smash them like a potter’s jar!’ ” So now, you kings, do what is wise; you rulers of the earth, submit to correction! Serve the LORD in fear! Repent in terror! Give sincere homage! Otherwise he will be angry, and you will die because of your behavior, when his anger quickly ignites. How blessed are all who take shelter in him!” (NET)

Psalm 82:1–8

God takes his stand in the divine assembly; among the divine beings he renders judgment: “How long will you judge partially by showing favor on the wicked? Interlude Defend the poor and the fatherless. Vindicate the afflicted and the poor. Rescue the poor and the needy, delivering them from the power of the wicked. They neither know nor understand; they walk about in the dark while all the foundations of the earth are shaken. Indeed I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. However, as all human beings do, you will die, and like other rulers, you will fall.’ Arise, God, to judge the earth, for all nations belong to you.” (ISV)

John continues and he breaks into a doxology of praise as a result of his writing about and meditating on the Lord, who He is and everything that Jesus has achieved. This spontaneous worship tells us something about John’s heart that points to a characteristic of believers. We too should, as we reflect on our King, trigger worship.

Revelation 1:5–6

“and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (NASB95)

Everything we are about to see in Revelation is possible only because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus set us free as He paid the price for our sin on the cross. He made a payment for each of us there. He paid the ransom that was due in order to remove us from the slave market of sin, from the prison we are in, in order to set us free. “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36, NASB95) We see that payment that frees us, reflected in what He says on the cross in John 19:30. “Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (NASB95)

The word translated as finished is the Greek word Τετέλεσται (tetelistai) – “to pay what is due, pay.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 998) The word signifies the perfect accomplishment of that work whereby the

Scripture is fulfilled. The root word is from τέλος, a tax = to pay taxes or tribute. (Cremer and Urwick trans. 1895, 543)

Jesus used a financial term as His last words on the cross. Jesus, by paying the price for us, has set us free. The victory He has achieved over the cosmic powers we discussed early, is because of the cross. The why to all of this? Jesus loves us is why.

This emphasizes his ongoing love rooted in his past loving sacrifice on the cross, his present love for his followers, and his future love in defeating the cosmic powers on our behalf. (Osborne, Revelation: Verse by Verse, Osborne New Testament Commentaries 2016, 27)

He “released us from our sins.”

The Greek word translated as released is the word λύσαντι (lusante) which comes from the root word λυω (luo.) λυω means “to undo something that is used to tie up or constrain something, loose, untie bonds to set free something tied or similarly constrained, set free, loose, untie, to reduce something by violence into its components, destroy, to do away with, destroy, bring to an end, abolish.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 607)

Jesus has set us free, He released us from that which had previously bound us up, our sin. If you are in Jesus Christ, you are no longer bound up in that sin and are truly free. Or again as we read in John 8:36, “...if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (NASB95) Result number one, we are free because of Him. Jesus achieved our freedom on the cross.

Also, as a result of that accomplished work on the cross, John tells us that Jesus has a future for us, we will have jobs. “He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father...” Osborne states it clearly for us.

The second result of Christ’s love is his inclusion of us in his royal and priestly offices. This is an incredible gift that fulfills one of the central covenant promises of the Old Testament, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod 19:6). The verb “make” here likely has the same force it has in Acts 2:36 and Mark 3:14, namely an official commissioning to office. Here and in Revelation 5:10 the emphasis is upon the twofold work of Christ as royal (Davidic) Messiah and high priest, passed on to the church. The people of God are kingdom not only as being part of the realm in which God rules but also of ruling with Christ in it—in other words, we are both kingdom citizens and royalty within it, a frequent emphasis in the book (see 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). (Osborne, Revelation: Verse by Verse, Osborne New Testament Commentaries 2016, 27)

Peter, after all of the things he went through in his life, clearly remembered what it is that Jesus told him. In 1 Peter 2:5–10 Peter talks to the believer who is being set up for a future priesthood “you yourselves, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it says in scripture, “Look, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen and priceless cornerstone, and whoever believes in him will never be put to shame.” So you who believe see his value, but for those who do not believe, the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and a stumbling-stone and a rock to trip over. They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. You once were not a people, but now you are God’s people. You were shown no mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (NET)

If you are in Christ, you are free, like you have never been before, and you have a new job description, priest of the Most High God. Look at the song the throne guardians and the 24 elders sing in Revelation 5:9-10. “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”” (NASB95)

Ok, here is the list so far; free, priest and thanks to Paul in Romans 8:16 & 17, we can add a few more items to the list. "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." (NASB95)

Jesus is King and Priest, as heirs with Him, we are as well and just like John, we are left with only being able to say..."to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Revelation 1:7–8

"BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (NASB95)

These first few words of Revelation 1:7 should be familiar to us as it comes from Daniel chapter 7.

Daniel 7:13

"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him." (NASB95)

Jesus is the cloud rider. Coming in the clouds, for someone living at that time, is a clear sign of deity. We are talking about something that only God can do. This was why the high priest, when questioning Jesus during one of the illegal trials that took place prior to His crucifixion, asked the right question and Jesus clearly communicated who He is to him.

Matthew 26:63–65

"But Jesus was silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and declared, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Now you have heard the blasphemy!" (NET)

The high priest got it. He knew what that statement meant as his actions of tearing his robe, also illegal, in verse 65 communicates that he knew this was a statement that Jesus was making and saying He is that one riding in the clouds. Jesus said He is the cloud rider. He is God.

I love the place that Jesus wants to meet us when He comes for His church, that same location, the clouds.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

"Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." (NASB95)

This is a deliberate blow to the unseen powers who are behind the physical world, the same ones who were alluded to in verse 5. Satan thinks he is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2,) but that is where Jesus will go to gather His body, the church. Jesus is the cloud rider, He is God, and He is coming soon.

Looking at the section of scripture that Jesus referred to in the synagogue, Isaiah 61:1–2, we see He stopped at a comma, there is much more to come. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn," (NASB95)

Psalms 82:7

"Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes." (NASB95)

This book is all about the ending of the rebellion and the fulfillment of what was prophesized in Psalm 82

And as He moves to eliminate all rebellion and provide a final restoration and undoing of Genesis 3, 6 and 11, He makes clear that this will not take place in secret..."every eye will see Him..."

Zechariah 12:10–14

"I will pour out on the kingship of David and the population of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look to me, the one they have pierced. They will lament for him as one laments for an only son, and there will be a bitter cry for him like the bitter cry for a firstborn. On that day the lamentation in Jerusalem will be as great as the lamentation at Hadad-Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, clan by clan—the clan of the royal household of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the clan of the family of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; the clan of the descendants of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; and the clan of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves—all the clans that remain, each separately with their wives." (NET)

These two prophetic motifs are joined by John and adapted to describe the impending advent of the victorious Christ and the response of a hostile world to the revelation of his universal sovereignty. The event is so immediate and certain that John can announce, "Look, he is coming" (cf. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) (Mounce 1997, 50)

Finally in verse 8, YAHWEH speaks. He does so only here and then again in Revelation 21:5 – 8 Alpha and Omega represent the Hebrew Aleph and Tau, which were regarded not simply as the first and last letters of the alphabet, but as including all the letters in between. Hence, the title sets forth God as the sovereign Lord over everything that takes place in the entire course of human history. (Mounce 1997, 51-52)

He is the Almighty, a term in the Greek which shows up in the Septuagint – παντοκράτωρ – pantokrator - the Almighty, All-Powerful, Omnipotent (One) only of God. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 755)

This term shows up in the Septuagint version of the old testament 180 times in 172 verses, but only ten times in the new testament based on a Greek word search.

It often translates the Old Testament title "LORD of hosts" in the Septuagint. (Osborne, Revelation: Verse by Verse, Osborne New Testament Commentaries 2016, 31)

This again shows that God is in control of all realms, physical and spiritual. He is the one who is calling the shots. He is the I AM...the Almighty.

Revelation 1:19

"Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." (NASB95)

Next week – Patmos and the" things you have seen."

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